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From Pioneer of Comics to Cultural Myth: Castelao in Galician Graphic Biography

David Miranda-Barreiro

Abstract

The multifaceted Galician artist, writer and politician Alfonso Daniel Rodríguez Castelao (1886-1950) has been considered a pioneer of Galician comics or *banda deseñada* due to his key role in the development of the medium, from his early comic strips in the magazine *Vida Gallega* [Galician Life] (1909), to the cartoons he published in the press in the 1920s and 1930s. Furthermore, Castelao has also become a comics character in a number of graphic biographies since the end of the 1970s, which the article will examine, not only addressing the reasons for the recurrent presence of Castelao in Galician comics but also how they have contributed to the process of mythologisation of this important figure of Galician culture. In aesthetic terms, it will reveal the similarities between adaptation, biography and comics when analysing them as networks.

Keywords: Castelao, Galicia, graphic biography, *banda deseñada*, ‘biomythography’, adaptation.

Introduction

In one of the first academic studies on Galician comics, Germán Hermida suggested that *banda deseñada*¹ was ‘a punto de estourar’ [about to explode] in 2005, referring to how the medium was gathering momentum in Galicia.² This feeling was confirmed in 2010 by Isabel Mociño González, who pointed out that BDG ‘está a experimentar unha forte consolidación’ [is undergoing considerable consolidation] owing to ‘o aumento considerábel da produción (especialmente de álbums) e o prestixio e galardóns que os ilustradores galegos teñen acadado dentro e fóra de Galicia’ [an important increase in its production (especially albums) and the prestige and awards that Galician artists have received both in Galicia and beyond] as well as the creation of new publishing houses, magazines and institutional comics awards.³ However, this significance has not been paralleled by a similar academic interest, as Xulio Carballo states in his 2015 PhD thesis, the first one devoted to Galician comics.⁴ Before Carballo’s work, the special issue ‘Olladas do Cómic Ibérico’ [Views on Iberian Comics] published by Santiago de Compostela University in 2007 was the first academic volume published by a Galician university on *banda deseñada*.⁵ The medium had also been approached from a scholarly perspective by Agustín Fernández Paz in 1984,⁶ and by Xosé Luis Axeitos and Xavier Seoane in 1993.⁷ More recently, the online journal *Tebeosfera* has devoted a special issue to the artist Xaquín Marín.⁸ Comics specialists such as Breixo Hardinguey⁹ and Anxo

¹ *Banda deseñada*, taken from Portuguese (and in turn taken from the French *bande dessinée*) is the term now widely accepted to refer to Galician comics. In this article, I will also use the shortened version BDG.

² Germán Hermida, ‘BD 2005: Apuntamentos e dirección’, *Boletín Galego de Literatura* 35 (2006), 69.

³ Isabel Mociño González, ‘Galicia dende a banda deseñada: unha modalidade literaria en expansión’, *Mundubat begirada anitz / Un mundo muchas miradas* 2 (2010), 79.

⁴ Xulio Carballo Dopico, *Para unha historia da Banda Deseñada Galega: a narración a través da linguaxe gráfico-textual*, Universidade da Coruña, 2015 (PhD thesis), 3. In spite of being an unpublished PhD thesis, due to the great amount of ground it covers and its detailed approach, in my opinion Carballo’s work has already become a key reference for Galician comics studies, and will be abundantly quoted in this article.

⁵ *Boletín Galego de Literatura* 35 (2006).

⁶ Agustín Fernández Paz, *Para lermos comics* (Santiago de Compostela: Xunta de Galicia, 1984).

⁷ Luis Axeitos and Xavier Seoane, *O cómic en Galicia* (A Coruña: Deputación Provincial de A Coruña, 1993).

⁸ ‘Xaquín Marín’, ed. Félix Caballero, *Tebeosfera* 4 (2017). <<https://revista.tebeosfera.com/sumario/4/>>

Rabuñal¹⁰ have also published their work in cultural magazines. Another source of publications on *banda deseñada* has been exhibition catalogues,¹¹ and the website devoted to comics created by the *Consello da Cultura Galega* [Galician Culture Council] in 2001.¹² This article aims to contribute to the development of Comics Studies within Galician Cultural Studies, following the work previously undertaken by the aforementioned academics and specialists. It will do so by looking at the representation of Alfonso Daniel Rodríguez Castelao's life (1886–1950) in Galician comics.

One of the founding fathers of Galician nationalism, a key member of the *Nós* [We] generation in the first decades of the century and leader of the Galicianist movement in exile after the Spanish Civil War, Castelao is the most emblematic figure of twentieth-century Galician culture and politics, and a mythical status has been conferred upon him in Galicia. Literary scholar Ricardo Carvalho Calero argues in a rather hagiographical tone that 'Rosalia [de Castro] e Castelao, foron escolhidas pola consciencia nacional para a heroización, para a beatificación' [Rosalia (de Castro) and Castelao were chosen by the national consciousness for heroisation, and beatification].¹³ As also stated by Carvalho Calero, Castelao first captured the attention of the Galician people as a graphic artist and through his use of humour and satire to denounce social injustice and the problems endured by his fellow Galicians.¹⁴ He published several comic strips at the beginning of his career in the magazine *Vida gallega* [Galician Life] in 1909 (Figure 1), and became widely known owing to the series of cartoons 'Cousas da vida' [Things from Life], which he started to publish in 1922 in the newspaper *Galicia*. Some of them were also in sequential form (Figure 2). Furthermore, Castelao achieved international recognition with his *álbums* (in this case meaning collections of prints) about the Spanish Civil War: *Galicia mártir* [Martyr Galicia] (Valencia, 1937), *Atila en Galicia* [Attila in Galicia] (Valencia, 1937) and *Milicianos* [Militiamen, referring to the Republican army] (New York, 1938).¹⁵

In this article, I will analyse comics biographies of this artist since the 1970s to the present day: from the first (and shorter) graphic renditions of his life by Paco Martín, Ulises S. Sarry and X. Balboa (1975),¹⁶ to Isaac Díaz Pardo's treatment (1985),¹⁷ the album *Castelao* (1987) by Siro, Mazaira and Cubeiro,¹⁸ and the ongoing series *Castelao* (2012–2015) by Inacio and Iván Suárez.¹⁹ In addition to examining the formal features of these comics, I will pay attention to how graphic biographies have contributed to the process of mythologisation of Castelao within Galician culture and society. In this regard, and as Tim Lanzendörfer points out, 'unlike autobiography, biography in comics does not have a long critical history',

⁹ Breixo Hardinguey, 'Breve apunte para unha historia do cómic galego', *Consello da Cultura Galega* (1999) (available online:

<http://culturagalega.org/bd/documentos/breve_apunte_futura_historia_comic_galego_breixo_harguindey.pdf>).

¹⁰ Anxo Rabuñal, 'Do Cómic á BD, pasando pola historieta', *Renova Galicia* 3 (2007), 51–55.

¹¹ 'La historieta gallega' (Madrid, 2006); '10 anos de BD galega' (itinerant exhibition, 2007); 'Historieta Galega 1973–2008' (Santiago de Compostela, 2008); 'Galicia. Tempo de BD' (Barcelona, 2009); 'Galicia 2009. Tempo de BD' (Angoulême, 2009); 'BDG70. A revolta do comic galego' (A Coruña, 2016–2017).

¹² <<http://www.culturagalega.org/bd/>>

¹³ Ricardo Carvalho Calero, *Escritos sobre Castelao* (Santiago de Compostela: Sotelo Blanco 1989), 11.

¹⁴ Carvalho Calero, *Escritos*, 15.

¹⁵ They can be seen online on the *Museo de Pontevedra*'s website:

<<http://www.museo.depo.es/coleccion/catalogo.castelao/es.03110000.html>>

¹⁶ Paco Martín, Ulises S. Sarry and X. Balboa, 'Castelao: o home', 'Axóuxere' supplement of *La Región* 11, January 1975.

¹⁷ Isaac Díaz Pardo, *Castelao* (A Coruña: Edicións do Castro, 1985).

¹⁸ Siro, Mazaira and Cubeiro, *Castelao* (A Coruña: Nova Galicia, 1987).

¹⁹ Inacio and Iván Suárez, *O pobre tolo* (Santiago de Compostela: Demo Editorial, 2012); *Titoán* (Santiago de Compostela: Demo Editorial, 2012); *Máis alá* (Santiago de Compostela: Demo Editorial, 2013), *Atila* (Santiago de Compostela: Demo Editorial, 2015).

despite ‘the large volume of biographical comics in existence’.²⁰ Literary biography has not fared much better. Michael Benton also argues that since it ‘lies between history and fiction and has often been seen as the poor relation of both’, it ‘has attracted little theoretical interest from either side’.²¹ Due to biography’s liminality, I suggest that it is fruitful to follow a transdisciplinary approach by drawing on comics theory (Thierry Groensteen), literary biography (Benton) and adaptation (Linda Hutcheon), in order to contribute to the expansion of graphic biography studies.

Castelao in Graphic Biography

The consensus amongst Galician comics scholars is that *banda deseñada* came into being in the 1970s.²² Axeitos and Seoane argue that the late presence of a truly urban and industrial society and a certain delay in the arrival of new forms of expression, due to Galicia’s peripheral condition, hindered the appearance of comics, a medium whose origins are to a great extent related to modernity and an urban and industrial culture.²³ However, not only must Axeitos and Seoane’s generalisation about Galicia’s artistic deficiencies be nuanced (as Galician comic strips were starting to appear before 1936), but the repression suffered by Galician culture during Francoism should also be taken into account. As Carballo states, ‘[o] desastre da Guerra Civil interrompería, porén, as publicacións dos nosos creadores que (...) ou tiveron que exiliarse ou silenciarse – cando non ser silenciados’ [the disaster of the Civil War would interrupt, however, the publications of our [Galician] artists who (...) either had to go into exile or into silence – or were ‘silenced’].²⁴ It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the birth of contemporary Galician comics, in the last decade of Franco’s dictatorial regime, was not devoid of political intentions, as shown by the work of its two main foundational figures in this period: Xaquín Marín and Reimundo Patiño.²⁵ As argued by Carballo, in some of Patiño’s work there is an influence of, and even a tribute to, Castelao’s political prints.²⁶ Castelao’s influence and presence emerges from the very beginnings of contemporary Galician comics.

Inspired by Patiño’s work, and in particular by his avant-garde comic mural *O home que falaba vegliota* [The man who spoke Vegliot] (1972), several young Galician artists created the *Grupo de Cómic do Castro* [O Castro Comics Group] in 1972. Carballo argues that the backbone of this group was their anti-authoritarianism and their claim for freedom of expression (including the right to create in Galician).²⁷ Similarly, Axeitos and Seoane state that ‘hai no grupo unha pretensión de concienciar politicamente ao pobo galego através da linguaxe do comic’ [there is in this group the aspiration of making Galician people politically aware by using the language of comics].²⁸ In 1973, they curated the first official comics exhibition. Its leaflet, as recorded by Carballo, alluded to the origins of comics in Galicia:

[e]n Galicia pódese entroncar, en certo senso, o ‘comic’ coa tradición dos romances de cego, que foron de completa aceptación popular. (...) Pensamos que a mellor arma coa

²⁰ Tim Lanzendörfer, ‘Biographiction: Narratological Aspects of Chester Brown’s *Louis Riel*’, *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 59 (1) (2014), 27-40 (27).

²¹ Michael Benton, *Literary Biography. An Introduction* (Malden; Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 3.

²² For example for Axeitos and Seoane, Hardinguey, Hermida and Carballo.

²³ Axeitos and Seoane, *O cómic*, 5.

²⁴ Carballo, *Para unha historia*, 38.

²⁵ Ibid., 54.

²⁶ Ibid., 127, 131.

²⁷ Ibid., 148.

²⁸ Axeitos and Seoane, *O cómic*, 8.

que contamos é a do humor, a sátira, que é o que máis corresponde o carácter anímico galego.²⁹

[In some way, comics in Galicia can be connected to the tradition of the chapbooks sold by itinerant blind ballad singers, which were fully socially accepted. (...) We think that humour and satire are our best weapons, since they are better suited to the Galician character.]

In this statement there transpires the need to reconnect with a lost and interrupted tradition. Apart from the older precedent of the blind ballad singers' chapbooks (to which I will get back later on), here Carballo also identifies a reference to early twentieth-century cartoonists such as Carlos Maside and Castelao.³⁰

Castelao's influence on *banda deseñada*, as one of the first Galician artists who attempted to combine text and image in Galicia (both in sequential and non-sequential form), was also subsequently shown by the tributes that Galician comic artists have paid him since the 1970s; for example the exhibition organised in 1975 by the cultural association *O Facho* [The Torch], significantly entitled *Mostra de cómic galego, homenaxe a Castelao* [Galician Comics Exhibition, Tribute to Castelao]. The comics author Siro gave the talk *Humor gráfico, caricatura e comic galegos* [Graphic Humour, Caricature and Galician Comics], where he referred to Castelao and attempted to link his work to the emerging BDG.³¹ Furthermore, Castelao was also mentioned in a round table in the context of the origins of Galician comics.³² Once more, this shows the intention of new artists to somehow re-establish a continuity in the medium that had been broken by the war. Castelao not only constituted a key precedent, but also a mirror into which 1970s artists could look at themselves: the fight (against Fascism, against Franco, against totalitarianism, against the injustices suffered by Galicia) remained the same.

As the medium developed, Castelao also became visually present as a character in the initial attempts to bring his life into comics. In 1975, still under Franco's rule, the supplement 'Axóuxere' (devoted to children's comics, the first of its kind in Galicia) published with the newspaper *La Región* [The Region], paid tribute to Castelao for the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death. As part of this homage, it included a two-page comic entitled 'Castelao: o home' [Castelao: the Man] by Paco Martín, Ulises Sarry and Xan Balboa (Figure 3). The comic follows the typical cradle-to-grave biographical formula, but because of the limited space deployed to tell Castelao's life, it is also heavily dependent on selection, which is obviously a necessary technique of biography.³³ However, Carballo argues that due to the great amount of biographical information condensed in these two pages (thus implying a substantial use of ellipsis), this work lacks in sequentiality, and therefore in narrativity. Consequently it would be closer to an 'illustrated biography' than to a comic.³⁴ Contrary to this view, I consider 'Castelao: o home' to be the first comics biography of Castelao.

Firstly, while literary biographers 'highlight the inevitable gaps in the history and, where possible (...) fill each with a plausible scenario or explanation',³⁵ the sequentiality of comics is based precisely on the existence of gaps between panels: the medium is hence elliptical in nature. This allows a comic such as 'Castelao: o home' to have continuity and

²⁹ Carballo, *Para unha historia*, 173.

³⁰ Ibid., 175.

³¹ Ibid., 214.

³² Ibid., 215.

³³ Benton, *Literary Biography*, 21.

³⁴ Carballo, *Para unha historia*, 548.

³⁵ Benton, *Literary Biography*, 21.

coherence despite the wide time gap between panels. Following Thierry Groensteen's understanding of how time is represented in comics,

[t]he reader spontaneously converts the inter-iconic space into a temporal interval. S/he makes the supposition that succession in space (between two panels positioned one after the other) indicates succession in time. (...) The time gap between images can be very wide; this is the case of Hogarth's cycles of engravings, where each one represents a different stage in the life of the protagonist, whose entire 'career' is recounted in six or eight images.³⁶

Furthermore, Groensteen also alludes to the anthropocentrism that characterises the narrative of comics, 'the priority it gives to the character (...). From one panel to the next, the main character is generally repeated, remaining the centre of the action'.³⁷ Although this can generally be applied to what he calls 'traditional' comics, it can also be considered as a defining feature of 'biographiction', using Lanzendörfer's term,³⁸ since comics biographies rely strongly on the presence of their subject, as also occurs in 'Castelao: o home'.

Equally contentious are the 'cartaces de cego' [blind ballad singers' chapbooks] published by the influential artist Isaac Díaz Pardo (1920–2012) in the 1970s and 1980s, the last one entitled *Castelao* (1985) (Figure 4). As we have already seen, the *Grupo de Cómic do Castro* considered the original chapbooks as 'the antecedent to our comics'. These were not, however, exclusive to Galicia. Manuel Barrero also includes the *romances* [ballads] traditionally sung by blind men as examples of Spanish proto-comics:

[l]os romances solían llevar una imagen (a veces dos o más) encabezando un texto, siendo puramente descriptivas; cuando se popularizó el romance con cuatro imágenes (con textos al pie o sin ellos) estas adquirieron un valor narrativo, pero lo tomaban en función del narrador intermediario que reproducía la historia (muchas veces un ciego).

[ballads usually had an image (sometimes two or more) above a text, and were purely descriptive; when ballads with four images became popular (either with captions at the bottom or not), these acquired narrative value, but it was taken from the function played by the mediating narrator who told the story (quite often a blind man).]³⁹

Díaz Pardo's *Castelao* follows a comparable structure: it is displayed as a poster comprised of 20 panels (including the cover), with 17 of them having a caption underneath. These 17 panels are also numbered, showing a sequential intention. As in 'Castelao: o home', the biographical information (from the artist's birth to the controversial return of his body to Galicia after his death) is heavily summarized in the captions, and there is therefore a wide time gap between panels. Similarly to Martín, Sarry and Balboa's work, *Castelao* appears in most of them as a character.

Whereas both Carballo⁴⁰ and Axeitos and Seoane⁴¹ are reluctant to consider Díaz Pardo's posters as fully-fledged comics, by applying the same parameters as in the case of 'Castelao: o home', I wish to argue that Díaz Pardo's *Castelao* can be considered a comic biography in its own right. Moreover, the format chosen by Díaz Pardo also shows the

³⁶ Thierry Groensteen, *Comics and Narration*, trans. Ann Miller (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2013), 37.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 36.

³⁸ Lanzendörfer, 'Biographiction'.

³⁹ Manuel Barrero, 'Orígenes de la historieta española, 1857-1906', *Arbor* CLXXXVII (2011), 20.

⁴⁰ Carballo, *Para unha historia*, 688.

⁴¹ Axeitos and Seoane, *O cómic*, 5.

intention to recover and update a form of sequential expression regarded as precursory for the medium, suggesting that Galicia can turn to its own graphic tradition for inspiration.

As well as the temporal distance between panels, both works also share a comparable use of images taken from Castelao's own graphic work, which are emulated in these comics. These include reproductions of drawings from his 'albums' and from studies about Calvaries that he conducted in Brittany and Galicia. Furthermore, both comics represent Castelao by redrawing one of his 'self-caricatures', published in the newspaper *Galicia* on 26 May 1923. The use of this caricature is especially prominent in Martín, Sarri and Balboa's comic and serves to portray Castelao as an adult. Such direct references to Castelao's own work as a cartoonist reflect on his influence and key role as a graphic artist.

These two comics also have in common an approach to Castelao that can be described as 'biomythographical', borrowing Benton's concept. This scholar argues that

mythologizing plays a bigger role in this sub-genre than with other subjects. In fact, saintliness, idolatry and celebrity appear so frequently in literary biography that 'biomythography' is a more apposite term since it recognises the role of these aspects of myth-making. It encompasses the necessary invention of self and identity by the writer, and the virtual representation of the subject by the biographer.⁴²

Benton's view of (some) biographies as myth-making takes us back to the way Castelao was described by Carvalho Calero in the 1980s.⁴³ A similar stance is taken in these two comics. 'Castelao: o home' finishes with a quote by writer and politician Marino Dónega (1916–2001) that describes him as more than a man, a symbol: 'Castelao xa é patrimonio do pobo galego. No pobo tiña a súa ragaña nutricia e ó pobo pertencelle para sempre e por enteiro' [Castelao is now part of the Galician people's heritage. He took nourishment from the people and he fully and forever belongs to the people]. Although the last panel of Díaz Castro's work criticises those who want Castelao to become 'un santo inofensivo nun altar escolleito' [a harmless saint on a chosen altar], the comic also portrays the artist and politician as a Galician hero, 'o Castelao do pobo a súa esperanza erguendo por un mundo millor sin caciques nin demos' [the people's Castelao, who raises his hope for a better world without despots and devils].

It can be argued that one of the reasons why Castelao was constructed as a Galician cultural 'myth' was the fact that his life encapsulates Galicia's history in the first half of the twentieth century. He was a migrant in his childhood and a political exile in his adulthood, an active member of Galician culture and politics, and his adult life was marked dramatically by the Spanish Civil War. Narrating Castelao's life inevitably involves relating key events in contemporary Galician history, and is therefore open to be approached from an educational perspective, as we see in these two works. Significantly, 'Castelao: o home' was published in a comics magazine aimed at children; *Castelao* is dedicated on its cover to 'os nenos, a esperanza de Galiza' [the children, Galicia's hope]. In both cases, there is the explicit purpose of educating Galicians (especially children, in the case of Martín, Sarri and Balboa's comic) about their own recent history.

The same educational purpose can be found in the first full-length graphic biography of the artist, *Castelao* (1987) by Siro, Mazaira and Cubeiro. In this case, the biography is in album format (62 pages), and opens with a prologue by Antonio Fraguas (director of the

⁴² Benton, *Literary Biography*, 48.

⁴³ The view of Castelao as a 'myth' is indeed problematic, but it is beyond the scope of this article to provide a more critical examination of this issue, or 'deconstruct' it. For further analysis, see Craig Patterson's ground-breaking work in '"Delito e pecado": Castelao, Galicia e o antisemitismo', *Grial: revista galega de cultura* 202 (2014), 52–63 and 'From Racism to Redemption', *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 16 (5) (2014), 693–715.

Museo do Pobo Galego [Galician Folk Museum] at the time and Castelao's personal friend) addressed to the target readership of the comic, namely children:

[e]ste libro é moi axeitado para que poidas achegarte á súa vida e á súa obra. En viñetas moi ben debuxadas e con textos breves e nidios, descubrirás ó Danieliño, rapaz coma ti(. . .) Vaino lendo amodo; xa verás como che presta e que grande amigo te vas facer deste home alto e con anteollos, artista e político; o home que mellor soubo ensinar a amar á nosa terra.⁴⁴

[this book is very suitable for you to learn about his life and his work. In very well-drawn panels and with clear and brief texts, you'll discover little Daniel, a boy just like you. (. . .) Read it slowly, and you'll see how you enjoy it and what a great friend you'll become of this tall man with glasses, an artist and a politician; the man who best taught us how to love our land.]

Such didactic intention must be contextualised as part of the efforts to recover and bestow prestige on a culture that, as explained by Basilio Losada Castro, had been amputated and partially suppressed by the dictatorial regime of Franco.⁴⁵ It does not seem incidental that the first literary biography of Castelao was also published in the early 1980s, by Valentín Paz-Andrade.⁴⁶ Furthermore, and as in the two cases previously discussed, Castelao's life is also here approached from a rather hagiographical perspective, which places emphasis on his good-hearted spirit and commitment to Galicia, as highlighted for example in the splash page that closes the comic (Figure 5). The image shows a blurred reproduction of Castelao's face in the middle of a clouded sky, above a Galician landscape. Two texts by Castelao himself accompany the drawing, in which he expresses his wish to return to Galicia after his death in exile (either spiritually or physically by having his remains buried in his homeland). As well as emphasising such desire and the fact that his body was actually returned in 1984,⁴⁷ this ending also visually represents Castelao as a 'saint' who now watches over his beloved Galicia.

These three comics are thus part of a process of mythologisation of Castelao, as a way of reconnecting with a part of Galician history and culture that Francoism had denied its people, as well as restoring a link with the flourishing graphic art of the 1920s and 1930s. Furthermore, they also function as a way to rebuild Galician culture not only by actively engaging in text/image creation but also by taking advantage of the appeal that the medium has traditionally had for children, in order to contribute to the education of Galician young people who might attain greater awareness of their own history.

Going back to Siro, Mazaira and Cubeiro's album, it tells Castelao's life in a third-person narrative, following a chronological order (in cradle-to-grave fashion) and with a great deal of factual detail. Most of the historical facts are conveyed through the extradiegetic text included in the captions, which sometimes takes up most of the page, whereas the dialogues

⁴⁴ Siro, Mazaira and Cubeiro, *Castelao*, 5-6.

⁴⁵ Basilio Losada Castro, 'Literatura gallega y censura franquista', *Diálogos Hispánicos Peninsulares de Amsterdam* 5 (1987), 57-67.

⁴⁶ Valentín Paz Andrade, *Castelao. Na luz en na sombra* [1982] (Vigo: Galaxia, 2012).

⁴⁷ In 1984, the *Xunta de Galicia* (Galician Autonomous Government) repatriated Castelao's remains. Galician nationalism saw this decision as an act of manipulation by the ruling party APdG, the political heir of Francoism. The return of Castelao's embalmed body (another sign of mythologisation) was meant to represent the end of the transition to democracy in Galicia. However, Galician nationalism considered that Castelao's ideal of a liberated Galicia was far from being completed and that his figure was being assimilated and de-politicised by the same forces that had kept him in exile. See for example, Manuel Lueiro Rey, *Novas crónicas dunha transición intranxigente (1977-1988)* (Santiago de Compostela: Laiovento, 2016).

between characters have a more anecdotal (sometimes humorous) function. Providing such an important amount of information would probably not have been possible without the existence of the aforementioned literary biography by Paz-Andrade, on which the comic seems to rely in some places, and where the captions are quite close to Paz-Andrade's text.⁴⁸ Naturally, a biography cannot appear in isolation, as it necessarily has to make use of a plethora of reliable sources (letters, photographs, testimonies, the biographee's own writings, etc.). Furthermore, 'successive biographies ineluctably take account of their antecedents', as stated by Benton.⁴⁹ The result is therefore a palimpsestuous text, and in this regard a fruitful connection may be made between biographies and adaptations as 'inherently "palimpsestuous" works, haunted at all times by their adapted texts', following Linda Hutcheon.⁵⁰ Drawing on Roland Barthes, Hutcheon suggests that adaptations are 'a plural "stereophony of echoes, citations, references"', and hence they can only be theorised 'as inherently double or multilaminated works'.⁵¹ As graphic and literary biographies of Castelao are published, not only do they build on previous texts, but extend and amplify a network of references to pre-existing texts and documents. This comic includes direct quotes from Castelao's own literary work (for example on pages 12–13), personal correspondence (pages 21 and 54), texts taken from newspapers (page 61) testimonies from other writers (page 28), and Castelao's own graphic work. As with the comics that we have already seen, Siro, Mazaira and Cubeiro's biography integrates Castelao's cartoons and prints into the irregular page layout of their album. However, in this case, such images are not emulated but directly reproduced. As in the previous cases, I argue that this exhibits the biographers' awareness of Castelao's significance for the development of graphic art in Galicia. Castelao's graphic work is repeated and re-contextualised in an album that draws on this tradition to develop Galician comics. At the same time, all these intertextual references also contribute to the album's educational purpose.

Twenty-five years passed before a new graphic biography of Castelao was published: in 2011, *Titoán* by Inacio and Iván Suárez won the *Premio Castelao de Banda Deseñada* [Castelao Comics Award] organised by A Coruña Council. The very existence of this award showcases not only the consolidation of Galician comic art (despite the issues of distribution and visibility it still endures) but also the acknowledgement of Castelao as a key referent for Galician comics artists. Moreover, his importance for Galician culture and politics still remains robust, as shown by the supplement published by the newspaper *Sermos Galiza* in 2014, à propos the seventieth anniversary of the publication of Castelao's seminal work *Sempre en Galiza* (1944).⁵² This publication also includes an interview with Inacio and Suárez, where they refer to Castelao as a 'mestre' [master].⁵³ This once more underscores the influential status held by the artist in BDG. The inclusion of this interview in this publication also confirms the significance and prestige gained by the comics medium within Galician culture.

Titoán is part of an on-going series about Castelao's life. This ambitious project envisages publishing eight volumes. To date, four of them have already come out: *O pobre tolo* [The Poor Madman] (2012), *Titoán* (2012), *Máis alá* [Further Beyond] (2013) and *Atila* (2015). The series shares some characteristics with the comics discussed earlier, for example the integration of Castelao's own graphic work into the biography. As in Siro, Mazaira and

⁴⁸ Compare for example page 9 in *Castelao* and page 43 in *Castelao. Na luz en na sombra*.

⁴⁹ Benton, *Literary Biography*, 63.

⁵⁰ Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge 2006), 6.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁵² Marcos Loureiro, ed., '70 anos do *Sempre en Galiza*', *A Fondo. Caderno de análise* 58. *Sermos Galiza*, 13 March 2014.

⁵³ Interview by Marcos Lodeiro, 5.

Cubeiro's album, Inacio and Suárez's work is also constructed around a network of references. Personal correspondence is quoted on several occasions; for example, *O pobre tolo* opens with Castelao writing a letter to his friend and fellow writer and politician, Ramón Otero Pedrayo. Castelao's own writings also have a strong presence in the biography: in the same volume, the first lines of the prologue to *Sempre en Galiza* are directly quoted and the source acknowledged in a footnote.⁵⁴ To give another example, the whole book entitled *Titoán* is a recreation of Castelao's own short story 'Peito de lobo' [Wolf's Heart]. This comic imagines the process of writing the short story, therefore fictionalising Castelao's life to some extent, as acknowledged by the authors themselves.⁵⁵ The tension between fact and fiction, inherent to literary biography according to Benton,⁵⁶ is more present in this series than in the works examined earlier. Eschewing heavy reliance on facts and dates, Inacio and Suárez's graphic biography straddles adaptation and the conventions of biography. A case in point is an episode that takes place in *O pobre tolo*, where the Galician artist recounts his visit to an osteologist in Paris in 1921, recorded in his personal diary (published in 1977 as *Diario 1921*).⁵⁷ However, the comic goes beyond recounting this visit, and establishes a dialogue between *Diario 1921* and Castelao's collection of short stories *Cousas*,⁵⁸ which also includes illustrations by the artist. In his diary, Castelao tells how the osteologist showed him a collection of 'tattooed skins' taken from deceased men.⁵⁹ In the comic, he recalls that one of these tattoos is a bird with a letter in its beak.⁶⁰ This detail is not mentioned in *Diario 1921*, but Castelao used his visit to the osteologist as inspiration for a short story included in *Cousas*. Instead of resorting to the diary as primary source, Inacio and Suárez adapt the aforementioned short story, as one can infer by comparing the description of the osteologist in this text and his appearance in the comic, as well as by the fact that the short story includes a tattoo of a bird with a letter in its beak, both in the text and in an illustration.⁶¹ This complex network of references not only echoes the palimpsestuous nature of the adapted text, as previously discussed, but also the very essence of comics as a system, following Groensteen's assertion.⁶² Drawing on Armelle Blin-Rolland's work on Régis Loisel's comics adaptation of Peter Pan that links Groensteen's and Sanders' theorisations of the network, I suggest that the view that 'the comic functions as a network itself, engaging the reader in a translinear and plurivectoral reading' can also be applied to the biographical genre.⁶³ In this regard, graphic biographies multiply such translinearity and plurivectorality, as not only can the biographical comic be read as a network, but the biographical text (similarly to the adapted text) can also be understood as the result of a multiplicity of interconnected references.

Contrary to the graphic biographies previously discussed, Inacio and Suárez's is mostly told from Castelao's perspective, often in the form of flashbacks narrated by the artist himself. This strategy creates the illusion that Castelao is telling his own story, even though he often appears in the panels. Referring to Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home* (2006), Karin Kukkonen suggests that the presence of the narrator in the images is compatible with a focalisation in the

⁵⁴ Inacio and Suárez, *O pobre tolo*, 35-37.

⁵⁵ Loureiro, '70 anos', 5.

⁵⁶ Benton, *Literary Biography*, 30-34.

⁵⁷ Castelao, *Diario 1921*, ed. Xosé Filgueira Valverde (Vigo: Galaxia, 1977), 84-85.

⁵⁸ Castelao, *Cousas* [1926] (Vigo: Galaxia, 2007).

⁵⁹ Castelao, *Diario 1921*, 84.

⁶⁰ Inacio and Suárez, *O pobre tolo*, 13.

⁶¹ Castelao, *Cousas*, 38.

⁶² Thierry Groensteen, *The System of Comics*, trans. Bart Beaty and Nick Nguyen (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007)

⁶³ Armelle Blin-Rolland, 'Re-inventing the origins of the boy who wouldn't grow up: Régis Loisel's Peter Pan', *Studies in Comics* 5 (2) (2014), 275-292 (275).

first person.⁶⁴ Similarly, it can be argued that Inacio and Suárez's biography fictionalises Castelao's perception of his own life, presenting the text almost as an autobiography. This serves the intention of providing a more intimate insight into the character. Dreams and nightmares also recurrently appear throughout all the volumes, and because of these oneiric interludes the reader can have a deeper understanding of the character Castelao's fears, concerns and motivations. However, despite the series' intention to give a more 'human' perspective on the artist, the 'heroic' and hagiographical element is not absent from this biography. Castelao is for example depicted as allegorically fighting against political corruption⁶⁵ and fascism (Figure 6).⁶⁶ The series therefore contributes to both consolidating and perpetuating the mythologisation of Castelao as national hero and embodiment of Galicia's struggles for the new generations.

Conclusion

Today, Alfonso Daniel Rodríguez Castelao remains the most iconic twentieth-century figure in Galician culture and politics. Such a view of the Galician artist, writer and politician results from a process of mythologisation to which *banda deseñada* has contributed since its emergence in the 1970s. Castelao embodied anti-Fascist values and Galicia's struggles for the new comics artists, whose work was marked by the repressive conditions of Francoism. His towering status in Galician culture and society and his pioneering graphic work explain recurrent references to him in their work, and the appearance of graphic biographies about his life. Borrowing Benton's term, I have described these comics as 'biomythographies', in which Castelao is approached from an almost hagiographical perspective, sometimes portrayed as a Galician hero. At the same time, these comics show a clear didactic function (often aimed at children) which also serves to educate young readers about this key historical figure. Castelao's process of mythologisation and the aforementioned educational approach can be explained within the context of the efforts to recuperate a part of Galician history that had been repressed since 1936.

All the examined graphic biographies incorporate Castelao's own artistic work into their panels, either reproduced directly or emulated. This recurrence of self-referential images shows the awareness that Galician comic artists have of Castelao's graphic production and works as a tribute to his influence and pioneering role. In this regard, I have discussed the palimpsestous essence of biographies, and how they can be compared both to adaptations and the view of comics as a network or a system. Similarly, these comics create a network of references to Castelao's own artwork. The insertion of his cartoons and prints into comics created decades after his death also contribute to the idea of restoring the lost continuity in Galician comic art. Furthermore, the comics establish a visual dialogue amongst themselves. Although it was not possible to do this in this article, one could map similarities between panels (and even how whole anecdotes are depicted) throughout these works. There lies another network that could be studied in a future analysis of Galician graphic biographies of Castelao.

⁶⁴ Karin Kukkonen, *Studying Comics and Graphic Novels* (Malden; Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 59.

⁶⁵ Inacio and Suárez, *Titoán*, 29

⁶⁶ Inacio and Suárez, *Atila*, 36-40.